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SUBJECT: OVERCROWDING CRITICAL CHALLENGE FOR TANZANIAN PRISONS

¶11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Severe overcrowding produces poor living conditions in Dar es Salaam's prisons. Our observations indicate food supplies are sufficient, while sanitary and sleeping facilities are clearly inadequate. Remand prisoners at the Segerea Prison, who may wait up to five years for a trial, have limited recreational opportunities, often spending whole days exposed to the hot sun in a cramped court yard. While convicted prisoners at the Ukonga Prison may participate in an apprenticeship program, they too are subject to harsh conditions compounded by overcrowding. The Chief Justice and Director of Public Prosecution are taking steps to speed up the judicial process; however, these initiatives will not significantly reduce overcrowding in the near term. END SUMMARY

¶12. (SBU) On December 18, 2009, Embassy staff from the Consular and Political Sections as well as the Regional Security Office visited Segerea and Ukonga prisons in Dar es Salaam. There are four prisons in Dar es Salaam, of which three, including Ukonga and Segerea, are maximum security. Fewer than 5,000 prisoners are held in these facilities, but more than 50 percent are remand prisoners. Segerea Prison is the primary facility for suspects awaiting trial. These prisons employ more than 1,300 staff members.

¶13. (SBU) The Deputy Chief of Prisons (DCP), Dr. Salum Chambuso, and the Regional Prisons Officer for Dar es Salaam, Cleophace Rweye, briefed the Embassy delegation at Segerea, and then guided the delegation on a tour of both facilities. The officials presented a credible view of prison conditions (although the facilities were suspiciously clean). They provided access to the entire facility and answered questions frankly. They generally noted deficiencies.

SEGEREA PRISON: INTOLERABLE OVERCROWDING

¶14. (SBU) Segerea Prison holds 1,867 inmates, including 143 juveniles and 136 women held in separate wings of the facility, as well as 11 illegal immigrants (primarily from Bangladesh). (Note: The DCP insisted that all relevant protocols had been followed and the appropriate foreign country officials notified of the presence of these migrants.) The facility is secured with a padlock, attached to a solid wood door. The guards announced and manually recorded the number of prisoners in the prison each time the door was opened.

Several guards were standing at the prison door and others were in the lock up facility guarding the prisoners. Prison officials insisted the ratio of guards to prisoners was one to five but even on the day of the delegation's visit, when security may have been heightened, the ratio was visibly higher.

¶15. (SBU) When the delegation entered the juvenile section, the inmates sat in an unprotected courtyard in an orderly, yet cramped fashion. This space, where the juveniles spend most of their time, offered little shelter from the hot sun or space for recreational activities. Most wore tattered civilian clothing, reflecting their status as remand prisoners. Although primarily a remand facility,

Segereia holds a number of convicted juvenile prisoners, identified by the standard issue orange uniforms. Remand prisoners depend on family members to provide clothing. Delegation members asked how long on average the juveniles waited for their trials. The ACP queried a handful of remand prisoners about the duration of their stay. The majority had been there less than a year, but one remand prisoner from Uganda had been waiting for his murder trial for five years.

¶6. (SBU) Entering the men's wing, the delegation found more than 1,200 prisoners crowded into a small courtyard (roughly the size of a tennis court), with little to entertain them except the visiting diplomats. Although the prisoners could have overpowered the weaponless guards, they complied with orders to remain seated and were surprisingly subdued. The prisoners did not seem interested in physically challenging the guards. (Note: Guards at the prison carry batons, not firearms.)

¶7. (SBU) In any 24 hour period, these inmates spend twelve hours in the small courtyard, fully exposed to the sun and rain. Their remaining time is spent locked up in cells. Each cell is built to hold 51 prisoners but due to overcrowding more than 175 prisoners share the space. Thin blue mattresses covered the floor in neat rows with little room between them. Three prisoners share every two mattresses. There were no mosquito nets to guard against malaria.

¶8. (SBU) Each cell had two squat toilets, flushed using buckets of water. Given the number of men sharing these two toilets, they were certainly inadequate and likely unsanitary when not cleaned for the benefit of visitors. (Note: In May, CHRAGG investigated a report that inmates at another prison were denied access to toilets. The

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results of this investigation have yet to be released. NGOs have also reported that sanitary conditions in Tanzanian prisons are poor and contribute to the spread of disease. End Note.) Each cell had one shower facility, which did not appear to have a working showerhead, located in close proximity to the toilets. As with the juveniles, many of the adult remand prisoners appeared to be wearing the same clothes in which they had arrived at the prison, now tattered and soiled.

¶9. (SBU) The women's wing of the prison was in much better condition. The women's cells were equipped with beds, the majority of which had mosquito nets. There was a sheltered outdoor area as well as an open courtyard with sink-like facility. The women's wing is a mixed facility, holding 40 convicted prisoners and 94 remand prisoners. Ten children live with their mothers in the prison and are allowed to do so until age ten. With children being passed from one woman to another, there seemed to be some sense of community among the inmates.

¶10. (SBU) Both the women's and the men's wings of the prison had a small clinic for primary care purposes. The men's clinic had twenty beds and the women's ten. Eight male patients were receiving treatment in their clinic for malaria and non-life threatening injuries received during arrest. The women's clinic was empty and cleaner than the men's. The prison has one doctor, one clinical specialist, and three or four nurses on staff. Officials purchase drugs through the government tender system and, according to the DCP; they are available in sufficient quantities to treat the prisoners. The most common illnesses are TB, malaria, and pneumonia. Patients in serious condition are referred to local hospitals.

¶11. (SBU) The "kitchen" at Segereia Prison, an open tin-roofed facility, contained several large vats of thick porridge and beans, which was the day's meal. Inmates are fed one main meal per day which officials assured EmbOffs contained the necessary daily caloric intake. HIV positive inmates receive three meals a day. While the porridge was bland, delegation members agreed after a taste that it was edible. The officials said that inmates receive rice, vegetables, and meat once a week as well as sardines and fruits twice a week. This allocation of food is standard across all prisons in Tanzania. (Note: While the food seemed to be plentiful on

the day of the delegationQs visit, NGOs and the media have reported receiving complaints about inadequate supplies of food. End Note)

¶12. (SBU) The DCP stated the prison had running water, but the delegation saw large vats of water scattered about the compound that suggested this was not always the case. Officials said that the water comes from bore holes and wells, but they trucked in water when this supply was inadequate. (Note: NGOs as well as the Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance (CHRAGG) have reported that water resources are insufficient at a number of prisons. End Note)

UKONGA PRISON: OVERCROWDED CELLS, SHARP OBJECTS, LITTLE VIOLENCE

¶13. (SBU) The Ukonga maximum security prison faces similar challenges to the Segereza facility. Built for roughly 900 inmates, Ukonga holds more than 2,000 inmates. The cells are overcrowded and combined with poor sanitation, encourage the spread of disease. However, the expansive prison grounds provide adequate space for recreational activities such as soccer and bao, a local board game. There is an extensive vocational training program at the Ukonga prison. More than 1,000 long-term prisoners are trained to work as carpenters, tailors, upholsterers, or weavers. The goods made at the prison are sold locally. In addition to the workshops, the Ukonga prison has started a biogas project. Waste from the toilet facilities is diverted to a holding tank from which the gas is captured and used for cooking. Human waste provides fertilizer for the prison's crops.

¶14. (SBU) The officials pointed out that neither the kitchen facility nor the health center at the prison were finished. Prison labor is used to build all facilities at the prison but funds are needed to cover other costs. The officials lamented the fact that resources were not available to finish the HIV and TB screening center, originally supported by the Clinton Foundation. HIV screening is voluntary, but the DCP said many prisoners choose to be tested. Asked why HIV screening was not mandatory, the DCP said they were concerned that HIV negative inmates who tested positive upon completing their sentences would sue the government. (Comment: Such an eventuality seems highly unlikely, but the comment is in keeping with the DCP's other odd remarks about HIV. He suggested that inmates wanted to be HIV positive in order to receive three meals a day. End Comment)

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¶15. (SBU) One of the prison doctors joined us on the tour at Ukonga. He said the facility had three doctors and ten nurses. He contradicted the DCP, stating that the quantity of drugs received was insufficient to meet demand. Although inmates are allowed to receive medications from family members, he said they had to get special permission from prison officials.

¶16. (SBU) While Ukonga prison was a larger facility, providing inmates with more space outside their cells, to an outsider the security situation seemed no less precarious than at Segereza. Inmates have access to all manner of sharp objects in the workshops. In addition, there were large shards of glass on the ground. As at Segereza, however, neither the guards nor the inmates seemed interested or alarmed about these potential weapons. Asked about violence in the prisons, the officials said they had the occasional incident but did not have any problems with gangs.

¶17. (SBU) COMMENT: Tanzanians have a well-earned reputation for abhorring violence. The country has never experienced widespread violence or unconstitutional changes of government. We expected that the presumed criminals making up the prison population would be an exception to the general rule of Tanzanian peacefulness. Overcrowding in some American prisons contributes to significant rates of prison violence. However, our observations and discussions with officials indicate that this is not a major issue in Tanzanian prisons.

¶18. (U) The DCP noted on a number of occasions that the prison system "respects the human rights of the prisoners.Q He blamed both financial constraints and the sluggish court system, which takes

anywhere from two to five years to hear a case. He took advantage of the visit to suggest that the USG might be interested in financing several of their expansion projects to address overcrowding. From a human rights perspective, overcrowding in the prisons the delegation visited were worrisome and would likely be hazardous for any incarcerated American citizen. (Note: At the time of the visit, there were no known U.S. citizens incarcerated in Tanzania.) The government has taken steps to ease overcrowding. In 2009, President Kikwete pardoned more than 7,000 prisoners. Additionally, the Chief Justice and the Director of Public Prosecution endeavored to speed up the judicial process by realigning human resources, resolving cases through plea bargains, and implementing an electronic case management system. These efforts will not reduce overcrowding significantly in the short term.

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